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## Sri Lanka Australia: Building Better Networks for Gendered Economic Development Roundtable

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2021 the Australian APEC Study Centre and the Centre for International Development at RMIT University formed a partnership with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to host a two-year Gender Policy Dialogue initiative with counterparts from Sri Lanka and Australia to exchange perspectives, insights and experiences on the development of women's economic empowerment policies. Both countries recognise the importance of gender equality and have implemented a range of policies aimed at further accelerating gender parity within each country. But challenges remain for Sri Lanka and Australia, and this roundtable is an opportunity to share best practices and consider policy ideas in the future.

This roundtable is the first of many scheduled activities. It is an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute to developing women's economic empowerment in Sri Lanka and the possible next steps.

This two-year initiative is an opportunity to share best practices and consider policy ideas going forward. It will combine capacity building and research components to build a suite of interconnected and complementary activities which will deliver outcomes designed to support women's economic empowerment and labour force participation in Sri Lanka.

The aim of this two-year initiative is to:

1. Conduct a review of existing literature to identify the key impediments to women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka. The research will analyse efforts to improve women's labour force participation and identify which interventions have worked and which ones have not. The literature review and analysis will lead to the generation of a set of evidence-based policy recommendations that will inform civil society and policy makers in Sri Lanka.
2. Create knowledge linkages between Sri Lanka and Australia via in-person and virtual policy dialogues, online training, research collaborations, a study tour to Australia and networking and workshopping of recommendations emanating from research process.
3. Increase understanding of good policy and advocacy practice for government, private sector and civil society to support women's labour force participation and women's economic empowerment

## Roundtable Agenda

### MEETING DETAILS

**Date:** Thursday 2 December 2021

**Time:** 0900 - 1100 SLST | 1430 - 1630 AEDT

The invitation link will be sent separately.

*This meeting will be held via the RMIT University MS Teams platform. Please contact [mal.tennekoon@rmit.edu.au](mailto:mal.tennekoon@rmit.edu.au) if there are any technical issues.*

### WELOCME AND OPENING REMARKS

- 0900 -0905 SLST      **Introduction and housekeeping**  
Marian Baird, Professor of Gender and Employment Relations, University of Sydney
- 0905-0915 SLST      **APEC and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)**  
Scene setting address by Dr Craig Emerson, Director of the Australian APEC Study Centre, RMIT University and former Trade Minister of Australia
- 0915-0925 SLST      **Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion – A Sri Lankan Perspective**  
Kamane Hapugalle, Sri Lankan Support Unit, Advisor to Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

### PRESENTATION

- 0925-0940 SLST      **Overview of Building Better Networks for Gendered Economic Development Initiative**  
Briony Wood-Ingram, Program Director, The Australian APEC Study Centre
- 0940-0955 SLST      **Presentation on women's economic empowerment and increased women's labour force participation**  
*This presentation will share research and policy insights, including lessons learnt from Australia's journey towards gender equality*  
Leonora Risse, Senior Lecturer in Economics, RMIT University; Research Fellow, Women and Public Policy Program, Harvard University; Research Fellow, Women's Leadership Institute Australia National Chair, Women in Economics Network

### DISCUSSION

- 0955-1050 SLST      **Facilitated by Marian Baird, Professor of Gender and Employment Relations, University of Sydney**  
Stakeholders are encouraged to present the Sri Lankan perspective and discuss possible next steps. Stakeholders may wish to consider the following questions:
- Identify what needs to be done to promote economic empowerment of women and increase women's labor force participation in Sri Lanka
  - What are the pressing issues and priorities from the point of view of stakeholders?
  - What can Australia offer in terms of knowledge linkages to support increased women's labour force participation?

### DISCUSSION

- 1050-1100 SLST      Closing remarks  
Dr Craig Emerson, Director of the Australian APEC Study Centre, RMIT University and former Trade Minister of Australia